

# 2004 King County Comprehensive Plan Update

## Area Zoning Study

Department of Development and Environmental Services

<b>Study Area:</b> <b>East Renton Urban Separator</b>
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### **Summary**

This 76-acre area is designated Urban Separator on the King County Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map. The existing zoning is R-1 SO, Urban Residential – one home per acre within a special overlay district.

The proposed land use designation is Urban, 4-12 dwelling units per acre. The proposed zoning is R-6 SO – Urban Residential, six homes per acre. The special overlay district designation is not proposed to be changed.

### **Background**

The Countywide Planning Policies call for King County and cities to implement Urban Separators. Different from the Rural Area and Natural Resource Lands, Urban Separators are low-density areas within the Urban Growth Area that create open space corridors, provide a visual contrast to continuous development and reinforce the unique identities of communities. Urban Separators can play a significant role in preserving environmentally sensitive areas and in providing habitat for fish and wildlife. They also provide recreational benefits, such as parks and trails, and meet the Growth Management Act's requirement for greenbelts and open space in the Urban Growth Area.

The study area is within the City of Renton Potential Annexation Area (PAA). Renton objected to the Urban Separator designation, believing this area was suitable for higher residential density. This issue arose at the Growth Management Planning Council as the Countywide Urban Separator map was proposed to be included to the Countywide Planning Policies. GMPC directed staff from both jurisdictions to develop a mutually acceptable solution.

In October 2002, GMPC approved a modification to the Urban Separator map in the Countywide Planning Policies deleting the 76-acre study area from the Urban Separator and adding 119 acres within the City of Renton to the Urban Separator.

### **Applicable Countywide Planning Policy:**

**LU-27** Urban separators are low-density areas or areas of little development within the Urban Growth Area. Urban separators shall be defined as permanent low-density lands which protect adjacent resource lands, Rural Areas, and environmentally sensitive areas and create open space corridors within and between Urban Areas which provide environmental, visual, recreational and wildlife benefits. Designated urban separators shall not be redesignated in the future (in the 20-year planning cycle) to other urban uses or higher densities. The maintenance of these urban separators is a regional as well as a local concern. Therefore, no modifications should be made to the

development regulations governing these areas without King County review and concurrence.

**Applicable King County Comprehensive Plan Policies:**

- P-118** Urban Separators are corridors of land that define community or municipal identities and boundaries, provide visual breaks in the urban landscape, and link parks and open space within and outside the Urban Growth Area. These urban corridors should include and link parks and other lands that contain significant environmentally sensitive features, provide wildlife habitat or critical resource protection, contain defining physical features, or contain historic resources. The residential density for land so designated should be maintained at one unit per acre, provided that lands that are sending sites under the Transfer of Density Program may transfer density at a rate of at least four units per acre
- P-119** King County should actively pursue designating Urban Separators in the unincorporated area and work with the cities to establish permanent, Urban Separators within the incorporated area that link with and enhance King County's Urban Separator corridors.

**Analysis:**

The 76-acre study area is no longer designated an Urban Separator in the Countywide Planning Policies. The city of Renton has agreed to designate a larger area as Urban Separator within the nearby city limits. This new Urban Separator has also been designated in the Countywide Planning Policies. The result is a larger and more effective Urban Separator, with the additional benefit of increased residential development potential on 76 acres of Urban unincorporated King County. Elimination of a potential land use disagreement between Renton and King County should facilitate development and eventual annexation of this area.

**Conclusion:**

The proposed land use map and zoning amendments are consistent with applicable Countywide Planning Policies, King County Comprehensive Plan Policies, and the City of Renton Comprehensive Plan.

**Executive Staff Recommendation:**

Amend the land use designation for the study area from Greenbelt/Urban Separator to Urban Residential 4-12 homes per acre.

Amend the zoning designation for the study area from R-1, Urban Residential, one home per acre to Urban Residential, six homes per acre. Continue to include this property group within a special overlay district